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1923

### West Emerick School - Dist. #50

Country School Legacy: Humanities on the Frontier

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# COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY:

## Humanities on the Frontier

Project Director—Andrew Gulliford

Media Director—Randall Teeuwen

Exhibits Director—Berkeley Lobanov

### HISTORIC SITE FORM

State Nebraska County Madison

Location (in miles & direction from nearest town) 9 miles South & 1 mile West of Meadow Grove

Is this the original location? Yes

Name of building & origin of name West Emerick School  
(west of old Emerick store). Originally organized February 3, 1879.

Name & number of the district 50

Date built 1923 Years in use \_\_\_\_\_

Who built it? A contractor or the community? \_\_\_\_\_

Does it look like it came from a plan book or was it designed by the community? Plan book design

Names of former teachers:

Viola Reeves Killion

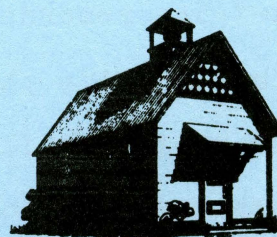
Names of former students (family names only):

Ernest McIntosh  
Fred Miler  
Bert Homan

Name & address of person in charge of building:

Mrs. George Killion  
Rural Route  
Meadow Grove, NE 68752

Who is the owner? ↑





# COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY HISTORIC SITE FORM

## Architectural Features:

Size of building 40 x 40

Number of Windows (four pane, six pane, etc.) 14 8-pane

Number of doors (entrances) 2

Number of classrooms converted to home

Bell tower or cupola No

Materials used (wood, brick, stone, etc.) wood with brick foundation

Type of roof asphalt shingles

Outhouses None

Playground Equipment None remaining

Color of building & trim white

Coal shed or stable Garage on property

Teacherage \_\_\_\_\_

Flagpole \_\_\_\_\_

Other architectural features: Front steps replaced by deck

Anything left inside? Converted to home.

Narrative Information: Did any special events happen at the school? What stories do people remember?

See attachments

Current condition & use:

Used as home by Mrs. George Killian

District records available: yes ☒ no \_\_\_\_\_ where stored Same at Madison County Courthouse

Black & white photo taken: yes ☒ no \_\_\_\_\_

Old photos available: yes ☒ no \_\_\_\_\_

Does the building have any state or national historic designation? No

Name & address of surveyor James L. Vertien date 11/80



Our first District #50 was organized February 3, 1879. "It contained all of the present District #50 and sections five, six, seven, and eight and the north half of sections 17 and 18 of District #95." The school was located on the north bank of Battle Creek. This creek is dry except when it rains. "The schoolhouse, a little frame building about the same size as other country schoolhouses, was one mile west of where the old Emerick store and blacksmith shops stood, which is nine miles south of Meadow Grove."

"In the earlier part of June, 1891, it started to rain and continued to rain for several days. One June day, the 16th, the creek had over-flowed. By the p. m. recess the water was swirling around the school-house."

Three boys, Ernest McIntosh, Fred Miler, and Bert Homan, went to a corner to decide what to do. They decided to go to Bert's home, located one-half mile east. They started east until the water got too deep. Ern started floundering around but finally got to firm ground. There he found that Fred and Bert were on the opposite side. They said they would go the other way and meet. He said later "I distinctly remember Fred waving his hand and saying "Goodbye Ern"." They had hit deep water and were carried away. Fred was drowned but Bert Homan managed to stay above the water until he caught hold of a windmill tower and climbed up it. He was rescued later.

The teacher, Miss Eva Johnson, tried to get the children to higher ground because the school-house acted as though it would fall apart any minute. But the littler children kept going down. So they decided to go back. The older boys and girls worked hard to keep them together. All at once a little girl, Mary Cox, started to float off. Bert Hamlin, the only child of a widow woman started after her. He was too late and they both floated off. They both drowned and their bodies were found downstream.

The little boy, Ernest McIntosh, made it to higher ground. He took to the shelter of a haystack, where he stayed until his dad's hired man came and rescued him.

On the 27th day of June, 1910, the school-board of West Emerick school decided to put down a well for the benefit of the school.

On June 11, 1917, they decided to get the Meadow Grove Telephone Company to install a telephone in the school-house.

September 29, 1919, the schoolboard paid for the erection of a metal windmill to pump water for the school children to drink. It was 20 feet tall with an eight foot fan-wheel span. It still is standing today. Also in the same year on September 10 the schoolboardsmen decided to add a porch to the northeast side of the school.

On October 4, 1923, they paid Claus Anderson \$4950 for a new schoolhouse or our present schoolhouse.

December 20, 1940, it was agreed by a 10 to 1 vote that they would hire some men from the Rural Electrification Association to put in lights. Compared to the amount we have to pay for lights today they didn't have to pay very much. They paid \$18 (eighteen) to have electric lighting for one year.

In the early 1900's to the period around the 1920's the teacher's wages were from 30 to 50 dollars. Sometimes between the years it went higher or lower. When our new school was built there were 38 children to teach. For teaching them our teacher got a mere \$100 (one-hundred) dollars.



THE EMERICK FLOOD June 16, 1891

Written by Ernest McIntosh June, 1936

Although I was a very small boy and it was a long time ago, forty-five years ago the 16th of this month. The things that took place that day come to my mind vividly. I can yet imagine myself standing at the window of that little schoolhouse and looking out upon that whirling mass of water.

The schoolhouse was a little frame building about the same size of most of the county schoolhouses of that time. It stood on the north bank of the Battle Creek which is a dry creek only when it rains.

The schoolhouse was one mile west of where the old Emerick store and blacksmith shop used to stand, which is nine miles south of Meadow Grove. A modern and more pretentious schoolhouse now stands on the same site.

It had been raining for several days previous to this day and the ground was completely saturated. It started raining soon after school called and it came in torrents. The creek started to rise and was soon out of its banks. When it came time for the after-noon recess, the schoolhouse was in the middle of a channel of water nearly one-fourth mile wide and it was coming into the building.

Fred Miles, Bert Homan, father of the present county superintendent, and myself were about the same size. We got in one corner to talk things over, went into a huddle so to speak. Of course, we thought the house was going to float off before very long, if the water should keep raising.

There was an attic in the house and Bert or I proposed we all get up there, but Fred decided against this as he said if it should tip over we would drown sure. We then agreed to try to get to Bert's home which was one-half mile east.



We went to the door and quietly passed out. The water at that time was about waist deep. We didn't get far going east as the water got deeper. We then decided to go north. Up until this time we all had hold of hands.

We did not get far north until we ran into a channel that was over our heads. We were all thrown down and floundered around for what seemed to be a long time.

I finally got on my feet and Fred Bert were on the south or opposite side of the channel. They called to me and said they could not cross to where I was, and would have to go the other way.

I remember distinctly Fred waving his hand and saying, "Good-by Ern". His body was found about a mile from there some time later after the water had gone down.

Bert managed to keep his head above the water and drifted with the stream until he came close to a windmill tower and he caught onto it and climbed to the top and stayed there until help came. I went north to a straw stack and stayed until my folks came for me.

Back at the schoolhouse, the teacher, Miss Eva Johnson, had decided to try to get the rest of the scholars to higher ground. Of course the water had been raising all the time and by the time they had gone a short distance, the smaller children began to go down. The teacher and Richard (Dick) Horrocks, Samuel Letheby, Robert Hawlin and a girl named Johnson, who were a little older and stronger than the rest, were having trouble to keep the smaller ones from floating off.

They then saw the utter uselessness of trying to get away from the schoolhouse and started back. The older boys worked like troopers and were getting them back to the school house when a little girl, Mary Cox, started to float off. Bert Hawlin, who was the only child of a widow



woman, stated after her. He was too late, they both floated away. Their bodies were also found later.

At the time there was considerable argument pro and con, and some criticism of the teacher and pupils for leaving the building.

Of course, that was true, the way it turned out, that it would have been better to have stayed. But standing in that little old shell of a building that day with that flood lashing it, I still think it would be a hard question for anyone to decide.

The Emerick Flood  
Ernest MacIntosh

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